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SUBJECT Interview with Admiral Stansfield Turner

BOB LEVY: We have on our Live Line Admiral Stansfield Turner, the former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Admiral Turner, thanks very much for being with us, sir. And let me ask you first of all for your analysis, from the point of view of intelligence and the military, of what this latest development means.

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: Well, Bob, you have to recognize that no fleet can have an airtight air defense at all times. The Argentines do have a large air force. It has not proved very capable up until now. But ever so often, one of those aircraft is going to get through and perform well. And it did in this case.

I find it unusual that with a single attack, and apparently a single missile -- but we have sketchy information at this point -- that a ship would be this destroyed. You would think it would have a lot of damage, but it would still float and be habitable.

LEVY: Well, that's what I wanted to ask you, Admiral. Let's sketch for our listeners, if we can, just how big a destroyer is and what, in your mind, it would take to sink one.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, this is a 3150-ton ship. It's a medium-size destroyer, by today's standards. It, I believe, should take two or three good hits to sink a ship like this, rather than one. I suspect, because it's fire that they've talked about being the big problem, that it was a lucky hit that

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caught a magazine or caught aviation fuel -- this ship has helicopters on it -- aviation fuel storage, and something just

ignited and they couldn't get it back under control. That kind of thing can happen at sea. But usually a destroyer would take more than one of these missiles, I think.

LEVY: Admiral, you seem to be saying, sir, that this may well turn out to have been a fluke. Is that a fair characterization?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, we have all been pretty skeptical as to the way the Argentinian military have performed up until now. Maybe they weren't putting their best effort out, for some reason. And we may, over the last week, come to underestimate them. I'm still skeptical that they are capable of mounting a really serious attack here.

Yes, I'm saying it is something of a fluke, in my first-blush glance at this. But, Bob, we've got very little information to go on.

LEVY: Well, I'm aware of that, Admiral. And it's much too soon to be drawing conclusions, of course. However, we can certainly draw this conclusion: that in the minds of many Argentinians, the score now would appear to be one to one. And if you accept that assumption, sir, let me ask you this: How do you think that augurs in terms of a wider war from this point on?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Again, it's a -- as I heard Steve Delaney say, it's a little early to try to judge whether the two sides will not press for a ceasefire or whether they will redouble their military efforts. My inclination is the latter, that neither side will feel it is an appropriate time to stand down or try to plead for peace. I think the British will feel that it will look as though they're weak if they sue for a ceasefire at this time. I think the Argentinians are still recovering from the loss of their cruiser and the emotion that that has stirred up, and that they too are not likely to say this is an appropriate time. "We want to get a little more even."

LEVY: No. But, sir, as you well know, in situations like this, before fighting gets out of hand, this may well be one of those intermediate times when diplomatic solutions are more possible, not less possible. Do you agree with that? And do you think the U.S. can play a renewed role in some kind of a diplomatic solution now?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I'm skeptical that the U.S. can. But certainly under these circumstances, the United Nations, Peru, maybe some other intermediary, Spain may step forward here, will redouble their efforts. And certainly there will be more effort made in the next few hours and days. So we can be hopeful that one or another of these avenues will take effect.

LEVY: Admiral, last question. What advice would you give the Reagan Administration right now in terms of perhaps escalating its diplomatic efforts behind the scenes to stop this conflict before it gets any worse?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Two things. One is, as you've been suggesting, make a bona fide offer to negotiate, or to mediate, rather. I don't think we're the ones to do that, really; but we should try. That is, I don't think we would be fully acceptable.

LEVY: Right.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Beyond that, I think we have to think seriously about coming down even more strongly on Britain's side, and specifically by invoking economic sanctions against Argentina.

LEVY: Would you urge that we put our military forces on any kind of an alert, sir?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No. Though I think we should be putting our logistics support forces, the Navy tankers and supply ships that could help the British sustain their navy down there, on alert. But not fighting forces.

LEVY: But what about the domestic political consequences of something like that, Admiral?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, we'd be keeping our people out of combat. We've got to support our ally, Great Britain, in this situation, because the whole Atlantic Alliance, in some sense, hinges on it.

But I want to go back to the economic sanctions, because I think that's in Argentina's best interest, too. Bringing this war to a stop is in everybody's interest. And somehow, you've got to get through to the Argentinians that they have got to back off their demand for a promise of ultimate sovereignty over these islands.

LEVY: Well, why haven't we been able to achieve that up until now, Admiral Turner?

ADMIRAL TURNER: We haven't applied enough pressure. Last Friday Mr. Haig came down on the side of Britain. But with that, we did not exercise economic sanctions. We did not cut off the billion dollars or so of trade between us and Argentina. And I think if we did that now, it would be a good sign to the Argentinians that we're darned serious, that they've lost trade with Europe, the Japanese are coming down on the British side, and that they're in for long-term problems.

That's one more form of signal and pressure on Argentina to make some concession at this point.

LEVY: Admiral, do you expect that that will happen?

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ADMIRAL TURNER: No, I don't.

LEVY: Why not?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I just don't think that we're ready, the Administration is ready to move that forcefully, after having started out in a position of neutrality. But I hope they'll give it consideration in the next few days, anyway.

LEVY: Okay. Admiral Stansfield Turner, former Director of the CIA, we thank you very much for being with us.